

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION



GREG GIANFORTE, GOVERNOR

1539 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE: (406) 444-2074
FAX: (406) 444-2684PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

DECISION MEMO ACTIONS OF A SPECIAL NATURE

Sheridan County Conservation District Resource Development Grant

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023

Sheridan County Conservation District

Administrative

Plentywood, MT

Sheridan County

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Sheridan County Conservation District (SCCD) proposes to update a water management plan based on the experience gained through 27 years of authorizing water permits through the Sheridan County Water Reservation. Water management includes evaluating irrigation impacts of permits currently authorized, pending applications, revoked applications, new application, and provisional permits previously granted by the DNRC. Main components of the plan are summarized below:

MONITOR AND COMPILE WATER-RESOURCE DATA

- Measure water levels from over 190 wells, wetlands, and lakes
- Analyze water quality from many of these sources
- Compile climatic data from Medicine Lake, Westby, and other climatic stations
- Calculate water use from both State and SCCD water rights

AQUIFER DELINEATION

- Map hydrogeologic features
- Define aquifer extent, characteristics, and volume, update as needed
- Delineate important areas of recharge and discharge
- Estimate volume of recharge and discharge

INTERPRET WATER RESOURCE DATA

- Evaluate potential impacts to existing water right holders
- Examine possible impacts to nearby wetlands and lakes, including the Medicine Lake Wildlife Refuge
- Assess undeveloped areas for irrigation potential

REPORT AND SUMMARIZE DATA

- Input data into the publicly accessible MT Bureau of Mines Groundwater Information Center

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- Develop an annual report summarizing data collected.

WATER MANAGEMENT

- Use the information above to evaluate new water use applications to responsibly permit and prevent over allocation
- Assist producers with water reservation permit applications
- Provide and interpret data, as well as recommendations to the Technical Advisory Committee in decisioning the water use permit applications
- Provide expert witness and/or testimony for water right hearings when requested

Explanation of the decision(s) that must be made regarding the proposed action (i.e. approve grant or loan and provide funding)

DNRC will approve the grant to provide funding for the Sheridan County Conservation District Resource Development Grant for the Clear Lake Aquifer Groundwater Management Program.

DNRC is not required to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for actions that qualify for a CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION or justified by a PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW; or are ACTIONS OF A SPECIAL NATURE (ARM 36.2.523(5)). These actions are subject to review for EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES that would require an EA or an EIS.

ACTIONS OF SPECIAL NATURE (ARM 36.2.523)

- ☒ Administrative actions: routine, clerical or similar functions of a department, including but not limited to administrative procurement, contracts for consulting services, and personnel actions.
- ☐ Minor repairs, operations, or maintenance of existing equipment or facilities.
- ☐ Investigation and enforcement: data collection, inspection of facilities or enforcement of environmental standards.
- ☐ Ministerial actions: actions in which the agency exercises no discretion, but rather acts upon a given state of facts in a prescribed manner.
- ☐ Actions that are primarily social or economic in nature and that do not otherwise affect the human environment.

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The project listed above meets the definition of Actions of a Special Nature, Categorical Exclusion or Programmatic Review including specified conditions and Extraordinary Circumstances.

Prepared By:	Name: Mary Hendrix	Date: 8/10/2021
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Approved By:	Name: Mark Bostrom Title: CARD Division Administrator	
Signature:	<small>DocuSigned by:</small> Mark W Bostrom	Date: 8/12/2021

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